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NZ AND THE US TO COOPERATE ON NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION

On Monday, 26 June 2006 (Washington time) New Zealand and the United States will sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in Washington, DC, that will see both countries provide assistance to the Russian Federation to permanently shut down a Soviet-era nuclear reactor.

“Both New Zealand and the United States recognize that the three remaining plutonium production reactors in the Russian Federation constitute a proliferation threat. The timely shutdown of the reactor at Zheleznogorsk will serve to diminish the availability of weapons-grade plutonium at its source,” said US Ambassador William McCormick.

“We are delighted to be working with New Zealand on this nuclear non-proliferation project. It is part of a series of multilateral initiatives that the US is involved in to address non-proliferation, disarmament, counterterrorism, and nuclear safety issues,” said the Ambassador.

New Zealand and the United States will work with the Russian government to construct replacement electricity generation capacity.

In response to the New Zealand government’s request, their contribution will be utilized for an environment-related purpose such as emissions control or some aspect of the facility that will assist the Russian Federation to meet applicable environmental requirements.

This will be the third Memorandum of Understanding that the two countries have signed since Ambassador McCormick’s arrived last year following an MOU on data-sharing on lost and stolen passports and an MOU on geographic data-sharing in Antarctica.